

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 006934

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/06/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [AF](#) [FR](#) [NATO](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH DEFENSE MINISTER: FRENCH
RAISE U.S. DEPLOYMENTS IN KOSOVO AND AFGHANISTAN; INQUIRE
ABOUT "DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES" AND CATAPULT TECHNOLOGY

REF: PARIS 6694 (NOTAL)

Classified By: Ambassador Craig Stapleton, Reason 1.4 B/D

1. (C) Summary: In an introductory meeting with the Ambassador, Defense Minister Michele Alliot-Marie conveyed French support for NATO operations in Kosovo and Afghanistan, as well as the NATO Response Force (NRF). The minister emphasized that NATO and European defense (ESDP) are not mutually exclusive, but complementary. She stated that mil-to-mil bilateral relations were excellent. Her own good contacts with U.S. counterparts have allowed her to better explain those areas of security policy where France and the U.S. disagree. Alliot-Marie also conveyed French concerns that OEF and ISAF missions should remain distinct under the joint NATO command proposal until the security situation in Afghanistan improved, and cautioned that NATO must not prematurely withdraw its forces from Kosovo due to ongoing instability in that region. She noted that to make a real difference in Afghanistan, the international community will need to address the drug production/trafficking problem, which is not a NATO, but more a World Bank or UN responsibility. Alliot-Marie took the opportunity to inquire about the status of France's request to sign a "Declaration of Principles," an umbrella military agreement which governs government and industry cooperation through the harmonization of relevant laws, regulations and policies, as well as of France's request to purchase U.S. catapult technology for its planned new French carrier. In addition to thanking the Minister for French assistance following hurricane Katrina, the Ambassador reassured her of the U.S. Government's long-term commitment to security in Afghanistan and the Balkans. The Ambassador said he would seek Washington guidance on the status of the Declaration of Principles and voiced optimism that progress was being made on the catapult technology sale. End summary.

Bilateral Relationship

2. (C) During an October 3 introductory meeting, Defense Minister Alliot-Marie (MAM), referring back to past U.S.-French differences on Iraq, told the Ambassador that she was pleased with the much-improved state of bilateral relations. She explained that she valued her good contacts with the Secretary, Secretary Rumsfeld, and the Ambassador, in part, because she was able to convey directly to them French thinking, especially in those instances where our policies differed. MAM also took the opportunity to observe that while France and the U.S. enjoy excellent mil-to-mil relations, there are a few outstanding issues she wished to raise, notably the status of France's request to sign a "Declaration of Principles" with the U.S., an umbrella military agreement which governs government and industry cooperation through the harmonization of relevant laws, regulations and policies. She also asked for an answer to her earlier request in Washington for catapult technology for a planned aircraft carrier. Alliot-Marie said the CHOD also had raised the Declaration of Principles with his interlocutors last September in Washington. On consultations on the design and engineering of the catapult, she noted that France wanted a U.S. compatible system for its carrier and that the MOD has been waiting for a further response from the Pentagon. The Ambassador observed that progress was being made on the catapult and that he would update the status on the Declaration of Principles with Washington. He took the opportunity to thank the minister for French relief assistance in the wake of hurricane Katrina.

NATO/ESDP

3. (C) Alliot-Marie said France supports both NATO and Europe's own defense planning (ESDP). France continues to be a major contributor to NATO operations and is a keen proponent of NATO transformation, including the development of the NATO Response Force (NRF), she added. By way of example, she observed that France was a significant contributor to the first four iterations of the NRF. She acknowledged differences with Washington on how best to use the NRF, with France preferring to use the NRF to respond to crises, as it was originally envisioned, and not as a force provider for general NATO missions. She fears that, if misused, the NRF would not be adequately prepared to respond

to crises and would draw resources from contributing NATO members. Additionally, Alliot-Marie made a point of emphasizing that NATO and ESDP are not in competition, but are in fact complementary and serve to strengthen Europe's defense capabilities. While public opinion may not see this distinction, one should not doubt GOF support for NATO, she stated. The Ambassador agreed that ESDP should complement NATO and that our joint focus should be on dealing with common threats.

NATO and Kosovo and Afghanistan

14. (C) MAM expressed concerns with respect to two ongoing NATO operations - Kosovo and Afghanistan. She noted that extremists in Kosovo continue to pose problems, as they had done in the Spring of 2004, which made it essential that U.S. forces remain engaged in that area and not draw down prematurely. Without an adequate KFOR presence, violence could spread in the region, the minister emphasized. She also noted that she had conveyed to SACEUR that the Nordic Task force at KFOR was in need of additional communications and intelligence support.

15. (C) On Afghanistan, Alliot-Marie reiterated her views against an ISAF/OEF command merger. She said she communicated this position to Afghan President Karzai in Paris (septel). She is opposed to a unified command that does not maintain the distinction between the two operations (reftel), adding that OEF is focused on counter-terrorism, while ISAF's priority is stabilization. Synergy between the operations is essential, but the two operations must remain distinct, she added. Afghans need to see the merger as a sign of progress. There need to be visible signs on the ground of the transition between OEF and ISAF, she stated. (Comment: The defense minister has been very forward in the GOF in voicing reservations about the proposed command merger. After the meeting, in response to our request for clarification, Alliot-Marie's diplomatic advisor Bernard Besancenot explained that MAM accepts, in principle, the proposed ISAF/OEF command merger at NATO, to include a double-hatted role, but that she continues to believe that the security situation on the ground is not stable enough to move forward on the merger at this time. He also added that to make progress on the merger, NATO should also take action on providing additional resources to ISAF. End comment.)

16. (C) In terms of France's commitment to ISAF and Afghanistan, she reasserted that France is planning to take command of the Kabul region with Turkey in 2006. MAM also raised the problem of drug cultivation and trafficking in Afghanistan, observing that President Karzai is trying to take action, but progress is unlikely this year or the next, especially as good weather had ensured a "good" opium harvest. The international community, i.e. the UN or the World Bank, needs to do more for Afghanistan, especially on identifying and supporting alternative crops for the Afghan economy. This is not a NATO mission, she stressed. She noted her unsuccessful efforts in 2004 to generate international interest in a conference to deal with Afghanistan's drug cultivation/trafficking problem.

17. (C) The Ambassador agreed with MAM that drug cultivation and trafficking threaten Afghanistan's success and the progress we have made to date. In terms of force commitments to NATO, he acknowledged that both the U.S. and France have extensive overseas force commitments, hence it was important that we continue to consult on prospective next steps in Kosovo and Afghanistan. He reassured her of the U.S. government's long-term commitment to Afghanistan and the Balkans.

French training program for Iraq

18. (C) In response to the Ambassador's request for an update on France's offer to train some 1,500 Iraqi security forces, Alliot-Marie indicated that France continues to support the NATO training mission, through financial contributions (trust funds), but that it did not envision French forces on the ground in Iraq. In terms of the bilateral French offer to train Iraqis outside Iraq, France was awaiting word from Iraq. France had made its offer, Iraqi experts came to Paris to consult on the offer, but that no further response had been received from the Iraqi government. Please visit Paris' Classified Website at: <http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/paris/index.cfm> STAPLETON